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Embodied labour in music work

Lynne Pettinger

Abstract

This paper frames the work of performance as embodied labour in order to understand the contingent production of particular music performances. It is an interdisciplinary account that sits at the intersection of the sociology of work, culture and the body. The concept of embodied labour is developed with reference to the complex account of materiality – of bodies and things – present in Tim Ingold's account of skill. This material account of skill is used to inform use to develop already of well established conceptualizations of body labour: craft, emotional and aesthetic labour through a reading of how these dimensions of embodied labour make possible the work of performance.

Keywords: Work; music; skill; craft; emotion; aesthetics; performance

Introduction

In this article, I explore one specific form of work: being a musician, in order to understand how a capable, competent, actively working body is made and experiences the world. The questions it seeks to answer are: how can we understand bodily effort? What can a body do, within specific conditions? There are two main aims to this paper. The first is to develop an account of the complexity of body labour, positioned in relation to three material modes of engagement: engagement with tools, with aesthetics, and with feeling. This draws on a re-thought understanding of skill that derives from Ingold (2011), and that interweaves craft, emotional and aesthetic labour. The second is to contribute to understanding music work by developing an understanding of the embodied labour of musicians that extends existing insights into musical activity that foreground career (Peterson 1997), social context (Toynbee 2003) or performance (Auslander 2004). The concept of (skilled) body labour produces an account of music work that incorporates fleshy bodies, technological conspirators, interactional encounters and judged performances.

Theorizing music work as embodied labour

Within British cultural studies, USA and French sociology of culture, a great deal of research has explored cultural work and its peculiar nature as a labour market (Menger 1999; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). Music work has long been of interest to sociologists of culture (Schütz 1951; Becker 1951), with insights into the career of musicians (Peterson 1997), to the importance of the local (Cohen 1991; Finnegan 1989) and to creative identity and genre (Hawkins 2002; Bennett 2001), and to how creative products are made (Toynbee 2000; 2003). Frith's *Performing Rites* (1996) provided important insights into what is involved in being a performing musician and, along with the call for attention to studies of 'the particulars of physical movement, gesture, costume, and facial expression as much as voice and musical sound' in musical performance (Auslander 2004: 3), has contributed to a research agenda that unpicks the detailed demands of performance. It would be impossible to understand performance without considering bodies, and indeed literature on musical performance, focuses on how bodily movement signifies persona (Cook 2014), and the resonances between body and technology (Bahn, Hahn and Trueman 2001). However, rather than accepting Godlovitch's claim that performance is 'a value-driven, value-laden, communicative exercise of specialized manual skill' (1998: 4), based on connections and relationships between musical agents, works, sounds and listeners, I show how the complex practice of skilled embodied labour in performance creates the contingent aesthetic experiences that Hennion (2002) suggests are so important for understanding music. I follow Marshall's (2010) call for greater cross-pollination between sub-disciplines, including for sociologists of work (like me) to engage with culture work. By developing a refined concept of embodied labour to explore the material, sensory experience of embodiment in the context of work, I show the ongoing accomplishment of work activity that is complicit in the production of consumer experiences.

Whilst the sociology of the body is theoretically sophisticated, from early claims about the omission of the body from sociology (Shilling 2012) to more recent work that

explores affect managed ‘in real time’ (Clough 2008), there is scope for further empirical investigations into the embodied experience of work, a theme which appears rarely in the pages of journals such as *Body and Society*, and which researchers interested in work have been slow to pick up on. The space for empirical research on working bodies is all the more interesting given recent trends in theorizing bodies that return to materiality, and that relate culturally- inscribed fleshy bodies to tools and techniques (Shilling 2012). This kind of theorising is well-suited to understanding doing work as it positions action as a contingent outcome of the networked interconnection of objects and agents.

In contrast to the explosion of interest in the body, sociologists of work are fewer in number, increasingly located in organization studies and often engaged in somewhat repetitive discussions, not least around questions of emotional labour. Studies of work have taken the body for granted (Morgan, Brandth and Kvande 2005), although recent writings by Wolkowitz (2006), Twigg, Wolkowitz and Cohen (2011), McDowell (2009), Kang (2003) and others are notable exceptions for developing understandings of body labour in the context of interactive service work, and Aalten (2007) and O’Connor (2007) amongst those who have explored the embodied demands of craft labour. This recent work has been productive. In the former case because it considers how the gender, class, ethnicity and age of bodies affects the way that body labour is done, and how work on the body of others is received. In the latter case, for its understanding of the acquisition of a competent labouring body, in the case of O’Connor, and of the particular misery of sensory experiences of work, for Aalten. Body labour involves anticipation, understanding, awareness of self and others: it is sensory, aesthetic and affective as it engages with objects and human others. Whilst body labour for Gimlin (2007) and Twigg, Wolkowitz and Cohen (2011) is often about work on the human other, and for O’Connor about (craft) work on things, the concept of embodied labour used here incorporates other people, material environments, tools and technologies as mattering to making sense of the effort of doing work. This consideration of multiple

materiality draws on Tim Ingold's (2000; 2011) work on skill, matter and environments.

In Ingold's account, skill is not an individualized attribute of a person, acquired through training and credentialised (cf. Green 2011), but a particular engagement with materials.

Skilled practice does not consist of imposing preconceived forms on inert matter but of intervening in the fields of force and currents of material wherein forms are generated. Practitioners, I contend, are wanderers, wayfarers, whose skill lies in their ability to find the grain of the world's becoming and to follow its course while bending it to their evolving purpose. (2011: 211)

The key aspect: working *with* rather than working *on* – whether that be with materials or humans – means that work is done through a conscious engagement by a situated working body committed to relationships with other beings, to a material environment and capable of judgment and discrimination. This reframing of skill provides a unifying point for my examination of embodied labour. In this paper, I emphasize the complex materiality of bodies, tools and techniques that are involved in doing work in order to develop insights into the practice of embodied labour. In the subsequent discussion, I elucidate how craft, emotional and aesthetic labour are entwined as dimensions of skilled embodied labour that makes music work possible.

Methodology

My analysis is based on an ethnographic study of semi-professional musicians in the UK. The musicians are part of a loose genre network, labelled Americana/alt-country, which we might characterize as an attempt to draw on 'authentic' (a troubling concept) American folk/ country music, self- consciously marked out from mainstream Nashville country in its rejection of a polished pop sound. Bands in the study differed in their understanding of, and relation to, Americana. The sound is guitar-based, with additions from American folk instruments such as dobro, harmonica, pedal steel. My research involved 11 semi-structured qualitative interviews with musicians, and several years of

intermittent ethnographic engagement in the field, including participant observation (offline and online, the latter including voluntary work as an album reviewer). This paper draws particularly on the interview data and on the ethnographic encounters at multiple live performances of five different bands/performers, *Antennas*, *Penniless*, *Mike Lang*, *Sarah Beaumont* and *Frances Mitchell*. Whilst I attended other gigs by these bands (and others) during the period of fieldwork, I refer in this paper only to gigs where I was present from the time when the band/performer arrived (and sometimes beforehand), and so was able to observe and participate (as a photographer, host and friend) in preparations and live performances. The stand-alone interview data and ethnography have been anonymised, with pseudonyms used for people and bands. This ethnographic engagement started in 2004, with the performances referred to in this paper taking place between 2006–8. The original research questions, about the interplay between work, leisure and consumption, gave rise to an interest in the working body, into the way inter-connected working bodies came together to produce particular performances and to build a space for the performers within the competitive proto-market of semi-professional Americana musicians.

In the field of local music production, as Cohen (1991), Finnegan (1989) and others have shown, the artworld (Becker 1982) is a loose network, as it is in the case with other small-scale cultural production (e.g. Craig 2008). Toynbee (2000) refers to this mode of organization as a proto-market. Proto-markets are loosely connected to dominant markets and bring together audience and performer in arenas that are not fully commodified. Proto-markets are made up of people ‘engaged in music-making sometimes for the love of it, sometimes for the esteem and sometimes because they expect in the future to enter the music industry proper’ (Toynbee 2000: 27). This location in the proto-market affects the sorts of work that are done. As identified by Hesmondhalgh (2007), many creative workers are underemployed and underpaid in creative work (2007: 72–3), and those in my study are no exception. None were signed to medium or large labels, few could take advantage of the networked division of labour

offered by being on a label (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 205). They did this sort of work themselves, via networks of favour and exchange, and this affected their success in the proto-market. Involvement in these networks relied on explicit and tacit knowledges of what could be done, and what was right to do, and these knowledges are part of the embodied labour of the field. I turn now to exploring the three dimensions of body labour that develop accumulations of bodily competencies to produce the band in the proto-market of Americana music.

Craft labour

In this section, I frame how the body learns and performs with instruments and other bodies as craft labour. How music comes to be sounded is central to the question of the body labour of the musician. Skill is an accumulated capacity of the body that makes particular kinds of performance possible, and hence particular engagements in the proto-market. Singing and playing instruments make demands on the bodies of musicians. Many academic accounts that ‘rediscover’ the body locate the surfaces of the body or see interiority in terms of psyche: skin and feelings, not blood and bone (Birke 1999). Such ‘surface’ modes of conceptualizing the body are unhelpful for considering embodied labour. Craft labour relies on a body that is neither only surface nor only subjectivity, but a corporeal self with muscles and bones, as Wolkowitz puts it, ‘bodies are worked on by the work they do (2006: 38)’. Bodily ‘flux’ (Birke 1999: 151) happens when work is being done or capabilities acquired. Three dimensions of the craft labour done by the musician’s body need to be foregrounded here: the body as instrument, explored through considerations of pain and singing; the body and the instrument, where I discuss learning and practicing; and the conglomeration of bodies that make a band. I do this by comparing music work to other kinds of craft work, in order to show how body labour can be partly, but not wholly, understood as craft work.

The body as instrument

The significance of the body in flux as a dimension of embodied labour can be seen

from observations of how a performing body changes. Photographing Frances whilst she talked to the audience, I saw her face relaxed with a hint of smile. A later photograph, taken as she was singing reveals the tension of body work. Here, the partly closed eyes, and the tension in the face, reveal what the rest of her body is doing to produce sound. Singing does not flow without effort (Frith 1996: 214); the musician breathes, opens her throat, projects and enunciates to perform. The body is thereby implicated in performance in intimate, significant ways, which are notable to audiences more when they fail than when they succeed (for example, when nerves cause breathlessness, something I never saw when watching Frances, but was noticeable in other performers). Singing is craft work, an embodied competency.

Aalten (2007) argues that dancers deny the materiality of the lived body in order to produce a body that performs; in particular, pain is suppressed in training and performance, and reframed as a sign of improvement. Musicians also work with and around damaged bodies: split fingernails and flat fingers with thick skins produced by friction against guitar strings, or sore necks from holding a violin, or lost voices from too much singing. They also carried superglue for fingernails and boxes of voice-care products around on tour in response to the body's vulnerability, with Frances being especially cautious about this than the men of *Antennas*. Pain, and the management of pain, are part of work, though it is hard to perform well when feeling the pain caused by ill-health or overused muscles and tendons. Pain interferes with the sensory, emotional and aesthetic parts of performance. Mike was one of many who suffer from work-related repetitive strain injuries (Arksey 1998). Despite the pains in his hands and arms that come from playing the guitar, he felt he could not take the physiotherapist's advice and stop playing. Not only would this mean he would lose gigs, and hence income and the benefits that come from being active on the scene, but he would miss the creative benefits of playing the guitar. But increasingly, he struggled to practice for long, and did more and more talking during performances to give his fingers a rest. When he saw a live performance by one of his heroes, who didn't finish any of the songs because his

fingers seemed to be hurting, Mike saw his own future and it upset him. As Hockey and Allen-Collinson (2009) suggest, we see something of the experience of work through this micro-level attention to the moving, feeling body. The experience and fear of pain contributes to workers' understandings of their potential as workers, and their ability to control the flux of the body are important markers of the quality of a performance, as judged by performers and audiences.

The body and the instrument

Hirsch's description of the craft work of the sailmaker shows how a capable working body is needed and produced in interaction between body, tool and object: 'the master or journeyman with the steadiest hand proceeded to cut the canvas, cloth by cloth with a sharp knife' (1985: 91). A steady hand, strength, the acquired skill at moving the body and the behavioural quality of patience all comprise craft work. In such an account of traditional craft work – and setting aside the critiques of this concept of craft – we can see how manual skills at working with tools on objects require expertise and judgment; they are enacted by a thinking body. Micro-attention to this thinking, capable body working on materials is needed to understand crafted performances.

There are a number of autobiographical accounts of an individual learning to play an instrument, and those written by academics who have also done other studies of music are of particular interest. They show how the musician's body is produced, equivalent to the steady hand, skill, strength and patience of the sail maker (e.g. Faulkner and Becker 2009; Sudnow 2003; Gibson 2006 – all jazz musicians). Sudnow (2003) describes how he learned, slowly, and painstakingly, to play jazz piano; how his hands came to know how to position themselves. He speaks of his hands as disconnected, almost separate from him. He learned through practice and experimentation, imitating at first in order to acquire a feel for movement, a feel for where the piano keys would be under his fingers and therefore where a sound might be found. Gibson suggests that being able to take physical movement for granted makes improvisation possible: the musician must have

the experience in his (her) fingers, although the possibilities for improvisation are constrained by the different ‘affordances’ of the body and instrument (2006: 179). Neither interviews nor casual conversation in the course of ethnographic practice generated a comparably reflexive account of becoming a musician, or working with instruments to these, although there were many, many conversations about the instruments themselves – especially the relative merits of different guitars, but also the challenges of moving a piano or setting up a drum kit, and work was done often on instruments (exceptionally, Frances made her own guitars, but all changed strings and tuned up; for *Antennas*, James was the go-to man for advice on buying, learning and caring for instruments). But, none the less, the idea of how musicians learn to be skilled individually and with each other seems well-established.

A different way of thinking is provided by Ingold. His account of acquiring skill speaks of the ‘rhythmicity and concentration’ (2000) needed by even the most skilled practitioner. Here the relationship between body and instrument is felt, and subject to constant attention. In the case of James, shy and awkward in social interaction but well regarded for his extraordinary ability to fit in and add something to the several bands and performers he worked with, conscious attention makes sense of how he was able to jump in and, sometimes, to hold a band together. Interesting questions are raised here about the different space for conscious attention in the process of becoming and being a skilled worker, and of the role of formal and informal learning, as well as routines of practicing. It was clear that James’ codified skills – he had learned classical violin as a child and young adult – were held to be significant to his ability to fit in musically both to him and to others who wanted to work with him. But his capacity to make bodily judgments marked him out as peculiarly capable.

The majority of musicians I met learned informally, as is commonly the case for pop music (Bennett 2001: 138). This informal learning involved the noticing and reading of others’ bodies in order to work out how to do something: listening, looking and experimenting. Developing embodied labour through bodily attention to others is

important to understanding how work becomes possible. Musicians learned tricks from each other, but first learned how to learn, acquiring the words to talk about playing in order to be able to collaborate with others. They learned the capacity to judge other artists, brands of instruments, and such like, as good or bad, and hence demonstrate subcultural capital, as well as knowing how to talk about chords, chord progressions and other features of songwriting and playing. Having these kinds of capabilities, and exercising them, were largely taken for granted as what any musician should do. For, and Owen, who looked in askance at another musician who did not play every day: for him, playing the guitar was as normal as cleaning his teeth.

An interesting exception to this rather taken for granted acquisition of craft labour was when Mike decided to change his performing style to ‘stand out from all the dozens of singer-songwriters’. This reveals something of how a body learns new craft abilities, as well as why. Mike had long been frustrated with the way he felt he was pigeonholed, both in terms of genre, and in terms of skill. Rather than relying as usual on playing with a pedal steel player (Ray) he consciously decided to ‘upscale’ his performance over a period of several months, so as to stand out. This change had two dimensions: firstly, he dropped his voice to sing lower; secondly, he learned how to ‘finger pick’ the guitar, rather than strum. Mike saw this as technically more demanding and better suited to his emerging musical direction. The new performance style meant Mike had to learn a new way to use his right hand on the guitar and develop new performance techniques to retain audience attention given the more limited dynamic range of finger picking. The finger pick seemed like a small adjustment, but this change had an impact on the rest of his body, including on how he could hold the guitar. As for O’Connor, the body’s materiality is not the only materiality that matters to craft labour:

an account of the development of proficiency must attend not only to the development of bodily techniques, those dispositions through which one can anticipate, but also to the material of practice itself and the forged sensibilities of the material’s properties in practice. That is, to an account of the body of the

practitioner, we must also bring an account of the body, or bodies, with which he or she works. (O'Connor 2007: 138)

Mike's explicit desire to re-value himself as a performer demanded a different encounter with between body and instrument, so he could be qualified differently in the proto-market as a better, cooler performer. He seems to have been successful in this.

Others' bodies

One critique of the idea of craft is the way it individualizes work. Autobiographical accounts of jazz music, perhaps inevitably, contribute to this tendency, and it is visible in other accounts of craft (Hirsch 1985: 91). Limiting understandings of craft to a story of worker, his (usually his) tools and objects gets in the way of seeing the complex ways in which craft work operates in collectives. The craft worker Hirsch studied works with colleagues and apprentices in the sail loft, and drinks with them after work too. In this work, as in the case of the performing band, there is a division of labour, and also co-ordination between workers to make live and recorded performances, and the other manifestations of the band. Making sense of this dimension of working to generate performances must involve paying attention to the sensory and aesthetic work that goes into producing crafted performance: musicians must learn to hear others, and to complement them. 'Choreography' is a common metaphor for studies of team work (e.g. Whalen, Whalen and Henderson 2002), and it is not achieved without attention and competency by those who participate.

In rehearsal and performance, the band is produced as a collective. Making the band tight and solid, and working out its possibilities are crucial to making performance good. In interview, Sarah recounted the different rehearsal styles of the two bands she played with. When playing in *Park*, the band that provides her with most of her income, each song is rehearsed separately, initially without the singer (although the band's brand is based around the singer). The band work hard to generate a connection between them that could transfer onto stage: they work to produce predictability and it is 'quite

professional'. In her 'heart' band, *Shiner* (where she plays her preferred musical style with her boyfriend, Rob), they run through the whole set, at the instigation of Rob. Rehearsal here creates the band as a product, and the flow of a performance is anticipated. But the songs themselves are not well developed. The contrast in the practices of these bands suggests that 'commonsense' knowledge of how to operate is not fixed, but a response to the band's (or dominant individual's) ideas about how to get it right, and to the somewhat unpredictable alliances and sonic assonances that arise from collaborative creative work. Sarah feels reluctant to admit it, but she prefers the certainty of the former method as generating a better performance. Two years after the interview, I saw Sarah by accident when *Penniless* supported her third band, set up in the wake of decline of *Shiner*. She was experimenting with a new genre and new collaborators demonstrating the skill, discipline and pleasure of shifting genres, collaborating differently and presenting her body with a different aesthetics.

A different kind of interdependency was visible from the observational data. When I witnessed one of *Antennas'* soundchecks, I saw and heard how the contingencies of the band's later performance was and was not managed, as well as the different contributions made by each member. Some help each other with heavier instruments, and all engage in banter. When they start to practice, it is the men with the most formal musical education, James and Martin, who make the most critical comments about the sound, and about where they were going wrong. Si, the singer was distant, worrying only about his monitor, and hopping off stage intermittently to chat to his girlfriend. James and Martin fret about the sound on stage and in the auditorium. They use a private – and apparently well-developed – language of grunts and short phrases to each other, and spell out their requirements a little more clearly when talking to the sound engineer. The soundcheck and rehearsal produces the capacity to collaborate in performance, and though different contributions are made by different performers, all must participate. The craft work of coordination shows how musician's working bodies labour collectively, with instruments, to create sounds and to create the trust and

experience needed for performance. Despite the grumpy soundcheck, the gig the evening was felt by the band to have been a success. As an observer and photographer, I paid attention that night to the active listening by each component member of the band. *Antennas* sound is made in a collaboration that relies on each body responding to the rhythm and moving with its instrument to make its contribution. Band members must listen actively to their own sound and that of others. They rarely look at each other during performance: listening and feeling is what matters. The violinist has her head down as she moves with the rhythm, the guitarist watches his fingers on the strings, and the singer is focused on the audience. The preceding hours of rehearsal are essential to generate shared understandings hence to create a coherent sound. There were times when I was present at gigs where this didn't quite come off. Craft work is thereby built through the work of performers, the affordances of the instruments and the production of a collective sound. Doing these things well are the taken for granted criteria of becoming a band who can perform in public, but how a band comes to be judged as 'better' than another requires attention to other features of the work of performance. Emotion per se, and the management of emotion are central to the embodied labour of music work.

Emotional labour

Emotional labour has been a compelling and seductive concept for many years, particularly for researchers interested in understanding the peculiar demands of interactional work. Emotional labour refers to the management of the feeling states of customers, patients (Hochschild 1983), and – in this instance – audience members. Whilst many researchers have developed this concept in helpful directions, including Bolton's (2005) recognition of how emotional labour might vary between occupations and organizations (see Wharton 2009 for a helpful review), I share Wolkowitz's (2006) criticisms of emotional labour studies for failing to understand how emotion is experienced with and through the body. Emotional labour is too often thought of as cognitive technique, not a bodily one – despite the many accounts of the relationship

between body and emotion (e.g. Lyon and Barbelet 1994). Framing emotional labour within a wider framing of embodied labour may assist in positioning the emotional requirements of a job within the broader context of work. It foregrounds how the bodily demands of managing emotion in order to generate emotional responses in others rely on the management of tools, techniques and material objects that make up a work environment, as well as interaction. Emotional labour looks somewhat different when skilled engagement with the material context is considered.

In this section I discuss emotional labour as a part of embodied labour, as it operates alongside and overlapping with the bodily competencies encompassed in the earlier discussion of craft labour. Emotional labour is needed to manage the band's relations to the artworld, tensions within the band, and the emotions of performance in order to show the relevance of managing emotion to generating performance.

Sociability

The proto-market of the semi-professional musician places some particular demands on the emotional labour needed. Its sociability and its constitution through exchanges of (paid and unpaid) favours obliges those who participate to maintain an easy flow of social interaction, where possible (see also Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011: chapter 7). This means that some irritations must be denied for the sake of carrying on. For example, Tim, a promoter who is known for trying to pay performers less than their agreed take of the door, remained important in the field even though he is personally unpopular. Expressions of frustration at his behaviour tended to go on behind closed doors, because a band who upset him risked losing the chance to play in future. The social relations and forms of sociability that are normalized influence the sorts of emotional labour needed, for example, maintaining the approximate balance of favours and obligations may be achieved through engaging in banter with someone who was not doing their allotted share. However, this balance is always precarious given how niceness may be at odds with the performance of a creative self, the competition for

access to consumers (via gigs and reviews) and the critical edge of judgments about talent that were rife. Further, newcomers and non-musicians might be expected to be nicer than established performers whose behaviour was at times difficult. When Greg moved from North America, the tensions of sociability were visible. At first he was open and warm towards Mike, Ray and others who he already knew: borrowing instruments and making the most of their contacts. As he settled in and got a few well-paid gigs with a more successful group he refused to return the phone calls of his original friends. Sociability here was instrumentalised to make the most of networks and connections. Once his star started to fade, he made an apology to his original friends still playing the small venues. In interview shortly after his arrival in the UK and before the falling out, there was perhaps something that might explain his behaviour

When you're an artist, a creative person, it's just what you've got to do, got to, or I won't be true to myself. And that has caused problems for me in the past, sure. It's really what I've come here to get away from. Because people don't always understand that this is what I have to do.

He refers here to tensions in a former band, and in relationships, where his 'single-minded' career focus is justified by a claim to a creative self. Certainly Mike, having had the brush off from Greg, was not quite so accepting. Other performers were similarly single-minded, but knew that getting on required maintaining face to face politeness in the local scene as much as possible – as well as perhaps being more socially aware, so that inevitable tensions for the most part bubbled under the surface of sociability.

The emotional labour of collaboration

Cultural conventions of creativity offer a limited license to behave as an artist might, and hence doing emotional labour in this context is not the same as for those workers whose labour is tightly managed and regulated by the organisation that employs them, as in Hochschild's original study. In the case of *Antennas*, the division of labour

between band members made for different emotional obligations. Si, the lead singer and lyric writer, wandered off or acted uninterested during negotiations with venue staff, as Martin, guitarist and de-facto manager did this work. Martin is obliged to manage his fellow band members too, to get them on stage on time and deal with their various demands. He can be seen managing the tensions between fellow band members, and negotiating the venue representatives. There is a sense that this comes at a cost: the deep sigh, the laugh when he realizes two of his band members have followed him across a room and back again; waiting to be told what to do. His (partly hidden) frustration is an example of how emotional labour is needed within bands or collectives to get through periods of writing, recording and preparing for performance. Musicians manage frustration, boredom and criticism, and often think about managing emotion when recording, so the tone of the recording is appropriate. Songwriting too might be influenced by emotional relationships surrounding the writers.

The performance of emotion

The emotional labour of performance is directed beyond the band and the local field, towards an audience (who may be fellow musicians). Emotional labour between performers and with those at the venue still matters, as bad relations may cloud performance. The interaction with a (paying) public also needs considering, and one example from ethnographic data provides insight: *Penniless* played a troubled set supporting a band in a different genre (in fact, Sarah's new band). The audience were not interested in a sensitive duo, and had for the most part come to see the main act. Tensions between *Penniless* members Owen and Amy were ever present; on this night there had also been a row between the venue management and *Penniless*' label manager, Joe, over money for the gig. There was a further, unspoken, tension about the band being ready to leave Joe's small label to sign to a mainstream, medium-sized label. The feeling in the room before the performance was strained, and both performers were jumpy. This spilled into the performance, as Owen blundered through songs, unable to compartmentalize his feelings. Amy's usual nervousness was heightened, she stuttered

over words. The performance is shambolic, as the strong feelings and tensions interrupted the performance, and could not be harnessed to it. The bodily manifestations of feeling, such as a shaky voice or a rather aggressive demeanour give lie to the idea that emotional labour can be understood without attention to the embodiment of feeling. Ingold's version of skilled encounters as encompassing feeling is helpful in reconfiguring this kind of emotional labour. When he discusses the 'intuitive' responses that people have in settings 'based in feeling, consisting in the skills, sensitivities and orientations that have developed through long experience of conducting one's life in a particular environment' (Ingold 2000: 25), he frames getting on as feeling your way through, rather than as an application of mind over recalcitrant body. For Owen and Amy, the environment, and their own orientations don't coalesce on this occasion, and they don't manage to produce a skilled performance.

In contrast Frances (a more established, and older, performer) is adept at channelling emotions into the performance, drawing on her single-mindedness about the importance of her career and harnessing nerves into focus on each song. When I follow Frances at the end of the gig as she packs up, receives congratulations from fans, answers the same questions time and again, drives away and sits down to eat, I have to rethink my cynical reaction to the claim that she now needs silence as she 'has no more music' in her, given the efforts of the multiple forms of work her day had involved. The different forms taken by emotional labour in these examples reveal the body work needed in the world of musicians. As performers work with instruments, bands and audience, they also constrain their bodies to manifest certain emotional states and hold back others. This influences how they are able to operate in the artworld. A 'good' performance, with careful use of emotion is crucial to the contingent but ongoing process of stabilizing the band as a valuable, desirable entity, able to compete in the proto-market. Bodily emotion work contributes to this, but is incomprehensible without the craft labour. What, though of the sensory and aesthetic?

Aesthetic labour

As Wolkowitz says, ‘our bodies are built out of and through our role as paid workers’ (2006: 55). ‘Aesthetic labour’ refers to the production of an aesthetically acceptable working body that conforms to the norms of the field. Aesthetic labour relies on worker’s engagement with consumption; it is a particular sort of consuming body that produces the working body (Pettinger 2008; Wolkowitz 2006: 29). (Potential) workers must invest effort and resources to produce an acceptable working body, and what this body should be like varies within stratified fields of consumption and by occupation. Clothing, hair, make- up, voice and instruments are part of the aesthetic labouring of musicians, and we might read the story of Mike’s re-working of his style and skills as an attempt to do a different kind of aesthetic labour: he changed his sound. McDonald describes the practice of doing aesthetic labour, without using the concept, when discussing the spectacle offered to the audience by the pop boy band *Take That*:

areas of intimate flesh are offered to the viewer by the various states of underdress displayed by the boys. Additionally, lighting, colour and make- up, each contribute to presenting the flesh of these bodies as a smooth, firm surface. (1997: 278)

Physical appearance is one dimension of aesthetic labour. In the Americana genre, bodies are not displayed as sexualized and aesthetic labour engages less obviously with mainstream fashion and beauty. But aesthetic labouring remains significant, although performers are reluctant to acknowledge it as such. For small-scale ‘Americana’ musicians, the relative absence of corporate and managerial control means aesthetic labour is experienced as part of the freedom of this work, even as participants tend towards conforming to genre norms (e.g. Hodkinson 2002: 36–7). It is worth noting that aesthetic labour demands do not necessarily force the worker to style themselves in ways they are uncomfortable with. Americana musicians do sometimes have ‘performance clothes’, but often these are not so different from their street wear. In this context, we can see that body work is not only done for the market.

Through clothing choices they signal the cultural meanings of the band and their engagement with genre. In addition to physical appearance of the musician themselves, instruments matter too, for how they look, for the kinds of sounds that are possible, and for what they might indicate about belonging to a genre or lifestyle. I did not see musicians being derogatory about each others' choice of instrument, but jealousy and admiration for high quality, high status or nice-sounding instruments was common. A musician unable to tune their guitar or who created an unpleasant noise in some other way, was, in contrast likely to be teased, if popular, but would also lose face. Aesthetic labour is small but significant element in the creation of the band or performer as viable presence in the proto-market. It is used to signal genre membership, and hence to make a claim to a good, authentic performance. It is a self-conscious promotion of a particular aesthetic, drawing on the history and politics of genre. Audiences require and respond to (and against) signifiers of 'country identity', which Peterson describes as:

establishing the right to speak involves knowing all the conventions of making the music . . . and the nuances of voice and gesture that make their work sound 'country'. . . . Music and performances are vital to the audience but signifiers are also vital. The boots, the hat, the outfit, a soft rural Southern accent, as well as the sound and subjects of the songs, all help. (Peterson 1997: 218)

The Americana genre takes this country aesthetic as a starting point from which deviation is encouraged, often with 'ironic' overtones, as in the *John Deere*¹ caps that were common to see for a while or t-shirts that reference the elder statesmen of the genre. This is comparable to retail workers who are not fashionably dressed only when at work, but draw on their embodied dispositions and orientations towards clothing (Pettinger 2008). To put it another way, worker's consumption practices and purchase of commodities matters if they are to become this kind of worker. Aesthetic labour is part of the work of performance and is therefore part of how the band is 'qualified' in the market; part of how the band positions itself.

To the extent that creative workers embody the products they are selling, aesthetic performances matter. In live performance, the aesthetics are managed through the set list (the songs which are to be played), which must have been rehearsed, and aural and visual aesthetics, and by any products (merch) available on the night, such as cds and t-shirts. In the Americana proto-market, performers had little control over the aesthetics of their environments. Lighting, such as it was, was unlikely to be varied; the acoustics of rooms above a pub, or in a community centre did not always suit the sound; and audiences often preferred to carry on chatting rather than stop and listen. Although Frances would happily shut her audience up, Mike relied on some- times ineffective techniques for getting heard.

The work of performance is obviously not enacted into empty space, and audiences influence the three forms of labour and hence the band's success in the market. A gig's rhythm and 'success', was, for Sarah, made by the dynamic between audience and performers: part of the skill was felt to be responding to the audience and the feeling in the room. Performing carried all kinds of emotional risks for her: 'But *Shiner*, because I'm personally involved, if we do a bad gig, I'm absolutely destroyed. If we do a good gig, I'm over the moon, but I'm much more emotionally involved with *Shiner*'. Seemingly aware that she was fortunate to make a living as a musician, she hastened to add that whilst performance was work it was 'nothing like other people's jobs'. Creating a particular sound and experience in the moment of live performance relied on being part of, and leading, the rhythm and the feeling in the room.

Conclusion and future developments

In this paper, I have discussed the application of a refined understanding of embodied labour, drawing on Ingold's understanding of skill, so as to bring into focus the material engagements of working bodies. I have then explored how this concept might encompass three ways of thinking about the work of performance of musicians: craft,

emotional and aesthetic labour. This conceptualization is designed to reveal what and how bodies work. Performance studies recognize the centrality of the body, implicitly one that labours, where gesture, technique and feeling are calculated to generate affect. This same body, however, also engages in all kinds of other practices, that can usefully be described as body labour, to become able to perform. Tracking such action – how the performing body has also squabbled with bandmates during a soundcheck, arranged the merchandize stall and warmed up their voice – extends the work of performance, and describes music work in the round. Bodies and instruments are brought together through the craft labour of playing an instrument; emotional labour is needed by different band members, in relation to each other, other participants in the field, and the audience; aesthetic labour produces a performing body that is appropriate to the genre, through specific consumption practices. These three dimensions of the work of performance are needed for individual working bodies to co-ordinate within a band. Bodies work to perform in relation to other bodies and technologies, and draw on prior engagements with consumer markets. It matters to think of musicians as workers in order to show, in a more comprehensive way, how the affect generated between audience and performers is made through the specific actions of the band, as a conglomeration of working bodies, technologies and techniques.

The account of embodied labour presented here could be extended in several directions. Firstly, it may be used in settings other than music work. Secondly, it can be further developed to recognize the way embodied work is located not only in labour markets but in markets for consumer goods, services and experiences.

Attempts to compare widely different occupations are perhaps doomed to failure, given the many possible ways in which differences can be found: employment contract, pay, social status, access and closure, and so on. Despite this, I suggest that focusing on productive bodily effort can bring new insights into the nature and experience of contemporary work. Skill, an encounter between embodied judgments and materials that are worked with, provides a concept for understanding how closely the working body is

imbricated in production, and it brings a complex materiality into understandings of work, a materiality that is not confined to recognizing human bodies but other material forms. When skill is further delineated into the distinct, but interrelated, components of craft, emotion and aesthetics, then we see the way work is constituted out of different kinds of embodied competency. Rather than privileging one concept and exploring its presence (e.g. considering the presence of emotional labour expectations in a specific setting), embodied labour conceptualized in these terms provides a means of linking up different efforts and expectations. In the study of service work, and other occupations outside the field of culture work that involve performance, then this conceptualization may be helpful.

Whilst performance in music work is somewhat different from the performances of the salesman, both must pay attention to the commercial setting in which their work is located. This paper has focused on how such work is done in order to explore the complex achievement of a working body, but what the work is aiming to achieve is also an important question. Drawing on Haraway's idea that the body is 'an accumulation strategy' (Haraway 1995: 510, cited in Harvey 2000: 97), David Harvey (2000) considers the labouring body's relationship to capitalist accumulation and conceptualizes the labourer – as worker, consumer, lover, etc. – as an 'appendage' of the circulation of capital (see also Wolkowitz 2006: 27 – 9). Labouring bodies are made through multiple processes of production and consumption, and work produces and is produced by the body of the labourer. The body, for Harvey is an active player in the processes it engages with and which make it what it is. As a 'desiring machine' (Harvey 2000: 99) made through work, working and consuming bodies are fundamental to how value is made and transferred in consumer capitalism. Embodied labour is thereby a site for the production of value in consumer markets. In the specific case here, working bodies (drawing on their own consumption strategies) produce specific aesthetic (aural and visual) performances for consumption by discerning audiences whose support is needed for performers to continue in their career. The desire and capability to developed

skilled ways of working with things and feelings can be read as an engagement with consumer markets as well as a labour market. Studies of work that do not recognize the product/service/ experience market within which work is located miss out on understanding how such a context informs embodied labour. In the case of music work, this might involve noticing how a performer or band might make a distinct space for itself within crowded and competitive proto-markets. In the case of embodied labour in other settings, there is far more scope for developing a greater recognition of how specific market contexts, target customers and market positioning affects how work is done, and by whom. None the less, an understanding of embodied labour as bringing together three dimensions of working bodies: as craft, aesthetics and emotion, is a productive way to develop further understanding of the experience of doing work.

Note

1. John Deere is a supplier of agricultural equipment, and the wearing of its branded products by British urbanite Americana musicians is, at least, intended to be ironic.

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